

Syllabus
REC6115 JAPANESE HISTORY AND CULTURE

International University of Japan

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I. Course Outline:

The objective of this course is to examine the historical issues and processes in the political, economic, social, and cultural formation of Japan, from the ancient times to the immediate post-World War II period. The history of Japan will be studied from two perspectives: the domestic dynamics and transformations, and Japan's relations with the external world. The main questions that will be addressed are: what are the major transformations and lines of continuity in Japanese history? What factors explain changes and continuity? What is the relationship between Japan's domestic dynamics and its international relations? What are the characteristics of Japan's cultural and social development? On the latter aspect, the course will introduce the evolution of the religious and ideological thought in Japan, the role of agriculture in the development of Japan's society and institutions, as well as the development of Japanese art, literature, and traditions. The course aims at providing the background and instruments to be used in the process of understanding Japan, its culture, and its international relations. Lectures will be conducted in English, and students with limited command of this language are also welcome to join the class. A previous knowledge of Japanese history and culture is not required. The class will be a combination of lectures, discussions, and video.

II. Assignments:

Students will be assigned reading material in preparation for each class. Before the class, students will send the lecturer two short comments related to the reading assignment. Each student, on a rotating basis, will make a short presentation on the reading material.

III. Evaluation and Grading:

- Students will be required to write a final essay of 2,000 words on any of the topics discussed during the course.

- Grading: Attendance 30%; Participation in class 30%; Final essay 40%.

IV. Lecture Contents:

1) Introduction. The emergence of the Japanese civilization

- What are the characteristics of the emergence of the Japanese civilizations?
- What are the origins of Japan's agricultural society and religious belief?

- Contents:

Geography and human history of Japan.

Hunting-gathering culture in the Jōmon period.

Yayoi period: Rice farming and the beginning of Japan as an agricultural society. The economic, social, and military impact of rice-farming and metal tool-making techniques.

Interactions with the Asian continent in the Jōmon and Yayoi periods.

Rites and religious practices.

Sources in the study of Ancient Japan

2) Toward the formation of the Japanese state

- When and how did the Japanese state begin to emerge?
- What are the origins and evolution of Shintō?

- Contents:

Myths on the creation of Japan.

Increase of agriculture production and social impact

The *Kofun* (burial mound) period

Tribal units and the gradual centralization of the rule under the Yamato kingdom.

Organization of the Yamato kingdom.

Military involvement in Korea and diplomatic missions to China.

Origins and evolution of Shintō.

3) Chinese cultural influence and the period of reforms

- What was the role of the Chinese influence in the formation of Japan's political institutions?
- What cultural developments occurred in this period of reforms?

Contents:

Introduction of Buddhism.

The Soga family's dominance.
The Asuka period and the age of reform.
The organization of the state under the *ritsuryō* system.
The Nara period.
Systematization and centralization of kami worship
The Hōryūji Temple and the Tōdaiji Temple.
The *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*.
The *Manyōshū* ('Collection of a myriad leaves'). *Chōka* and *Waka* poems.

4) The Heian period and the formation of a national culture

- How did Japan assimilate and adapt the Chinese cultural influence?
- What factors initiated the process of erosion of the centralized system of government?

- Contents:

The height of aristocratic culture. The *Genji Monogatari* ('*The Tale of Genji*'). The *nikki*.
Makura no Sōshi (*The Pillow Book*).
Origins of the art of the Japanese calligraphy. The *emaki* (scroll painting).
Introduction of the *shōen* (estates) and its impact on the centralized system of government.
The dominance of the Fujiwara family.
Rule of retired emperors (*insei*).
The amalgamation of Buddhism and kami rituals, and of Buddhist and Shintō thoughts.
Tendai, *Shingon*, and *Jōdo* Buddhist sects.

5) The Kamakura *bakufu* and culture in feudal Japan

- What are the origins and characteristics of feudal Japan and of its culture?
- What changes did the advent of intensive agriculture bring to the Japanese society?

- Contents:

Taira-Minamoto rivalry and the Gempei war.
Rise of the warrior class.
The establishment of the Kamakura *bakufu* and its organization.
Role of the Hōjō family.
The failed Mongol invasions.
Advent of intensive agriculture and its effects on Japan's socio-economic structure.
Buddhism in the Kamakura period: *Zen* and *Nichiren* Buddhism
Cultural developments: *Heike Monogatari*; *Nō* theatre and the *Kyōgen* (Japanese comic theatre);

The art of the tea ceremony (*Chanoyu*).

6) Political confusion, internal wars, and the age of splendour of Japanese art during the Muromachi period

- Why did the authority of the bakufu decline and what were the consequences?
- Why can this period be described as an age of splendour for Japanese art?

- Contents:

Emperor Go-Daigo and the 1333 crisis.

The period of the Northern and Southern courts.

End of the Hōjō's rule and formation of the Ashikaga shogunate.

The Ōnin war.

Weakening of the *bakufu* authority, rise of the *shugo*, and appearance of the *daimyo*.

The golden age of Japanese art: the *Kitayama* and *Higashiyama* culture; *Zen* architecture: the *Kinkakuji* and *Ginkakuji* temples; The *Taiheiki* (Chronicle of Great Peace); *Ikebana* (the Art of flower arrangement); Interior architecture: *tokonoma*, *fusuma*, *shōji*, *tatami*. *Sumi-e*: The art of monochrome painting.

7) Encounter with the Europeans and unification of Japan

- What impact did the encounter with the Europeans had on Japan's society and culture?
- How did the unification of Japan occur?

- Contents:

Arrival of the Europeans: introduction of Christianity and guns and their impact on Japan. The *namban* art.

The rise to power of Oda Nobunaga and the end of the Muromachi bakufu.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi and the unification of Japan.

Hideyoshi's cadastral survey and its socio-political impact.

Commerce and society in late 16th century Japan.

The invasions of Korea by Hideyoshi's army.

Tokugawa Ieyasu's victory in the battle of Sekigahara and the establishment of the Tokugawa *shogunate*.

The revival of Shintō and its increasing separation from Buddhism.

The evolution of castles architecture: the Osaka and Azuchi castles.

8) The political stabilization of Japan under Tokugawa rule

- What was the structure and characteristics of the political system in Edo Japan?
- What economic changes occurred in pre-modern Japan and what was the role of agriculture in this period?

- Contents:

The achievement of peace and stability under the policy of national seclusion.

Power structure of the *bakuhan* system. The *han* (domains), the hereditary *daimyō* (*fudai*), and the ‘outside’ *daimyō* (*tozama*).

The *sankin kōtai* system (‘alternate attendance’).

Economic changes in pre-modern Japan.

The role of rice as a currency for payment of tax and salaries: effects on the expansion of agricultural productivity.

Relations with foreigners during the period of the ‘closed country’ (*sakoku*).

The ‘Dutch learning’ (*rangaku*).

9) Transformations in Japan during the period of the ‘closed country’

- How did Japanese society and culture evolve under Tokugawa rule?
- What were the developments in religion and thought in Edo Japan?

- Contents:

Social changes during the Edo period: The division in social classes; The rise of the merchants and the decline of the samurai’s role; Urban life.

Culture in Edo Japan: The Genroku cultural period. *Kabuki* theatre. The *Bunraku* puppet theatre. *Haiku* poems. Bashō Matsuo. *Ukiyo-e*. *Bushidō*. The diffusion of *rakugo*; The ‘Forty-seven *rōnin*’.

Thought and religion in Edo Japan: The *bakufu* and Neo-Confucian doctrines; Emergence of a new form of Shintō thought: the ‘National Learning’ (*kokugaku*) and the study of Japanese traditions, literature, and institutions; Christianity under Tokugawa rule.

10) Wrap-up and discussion

- What were the features of Japan’s political, economic, and social evolution from ancient to pre-modern times?
- What were the major trends and developments in Japanese culture and thought?
- What role did external factors play in the evolution of Japan?

11) The end of the *bakufu* and the restoration of the imperial authority

- What factors explain the end of the *bakufu* rule?
- What was the role of the Chōshū and Satsuma domains in the collapse of the Tokugawa shogunate and in the restoration of the imperial authority?

- Contents:

Early foreigners' search for trade relations with Japan in the late Tokugawa period.

Intensification of the foreign threat: the opening of ports to foreign powers and the unequal treaties.

Domestic reactions to the foreign threat and political divisions on how to respond to it: the positions of the *bakufu*, the *han*, and the Imperial court.

The role of the Chōshū and Satsuma *han*.

Ideology and politics: the *sonnō jōi* ("rever the emperor, expel the barbarian") movement.

Domestic turmoil and the collapse of the *bakufu* authority.

The restoration of the imperial authority.

The Boshin civil war

12) Social and political changes in Meiji Japan and the study of the West

- What are the domestic structural changes characterizing the Meiji period and what was their impact on Japan's society?
- What were the features of Japan's interaction with Western culture and institutions?

- Contents:

The dismantling of the feudal system and the adoption of a centralized system of government.

The Five Articles Oath. The abolition of social classes, the introduction of compulsory military service, and the elimination of the samurai's social and economic privileges.

The 1877 samurai rebellion.

Learning from the West. The Iwakura mission.

The reform of the education system.

Bummei kaika and the penetration of the Western culture. The translation of Western works.

The thinking of Fukuzawa Yukichi.

Shintō in the Meiji period.

13) Economic modernization and impact on rural Japan

- What are the characteristics of Japan's economic modernization during the Meiji period?
- What was the impact of fiscal reforms and economic modernization on Japan's rural society?

- Contents:

Fiscal reforms under Minister of Finance Matsukata.

Industrial policy and the strengthening of infrastructures. The development of the textile industry and of other sectors.

The emergence of the big business houses (the future *zaibatsu*).

Modernization and rural Japan: Deflationary policy and its impact on rural Japan; Commercial farming and urbanization and their effect on the decline of village life and rural population.

Industrialization and labor conditions.

The debate on over-Westernization and the “return to being Japanese.”

14) Political thought and democratic institutions in Meiji Japan

- What is the process that led to the adoption of a parliamentary system and of a constitution?
- What trends in political thought emerged in Meiji Japan?

- Contents:

The Movement for Freedom and People’s Rights

Political thought in the late 19th century: Nakae Chōmin and the “A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government.”

Formulation and promulgation of the Meiji constitution.

Political parties, the Diet, and the Cabinet.

Modernization and the role of women in Japan’s society

15) The building of Japan’s international status and the blossoming of Japan’s modern literature in the final decades of the Meiji period

- What is the significance of the Japanese victorious wars against China and Russia for Japan’s international status?
- What are the features of the first modern Japanese novels?

- Contents:

The creation of an army and a navy, and the strengthening of Japanese military capabilities.

Expedition to Taiwan.

The 1894-1895 Sino-Japanese war and the Shimonoseki treaty.

The Anglo-Japanese alliance.

The Russo-Japanese war and the Portsmouth treaty.

Japanese annexation of Korea.

The blossoming of Japan’s modern literature: the works of Natsume Sōseki, Futabatei Shimei, and Mori Ōgai.

16) Domestic and international consolidation of Japan during the Taisho period and Japanese society in the 1920s

- How did Japan's society and life-style change in the 1920s?
- Why can this be called a period of "great possibilities" for Japan's domestic political evolution and international role?

- Contents:

Growing role of political parties and the period of party cabinets.

Consolidation of Japan as an international power: participation in World War I and the Twenty-One Demands on China.

Japan's cooperation with Western powers: the Siberia expedition; participation in the 1919 Paris Peace Conference; Japan as a member of the League of Nations; the Washington naval conference.

Political thought and social trends: Minobe Tatsukichi's "organ theory"; Yoshino Sakuzō and political thought on democracy; The penetration of socialist ideas; Nationalist currents; Rural unrest and the *nōhonshugi*; Labor conflicts.

The Kanto earthquake.

Economic and financial crises in the 1920s.

Changes in mass culture in the 1920s and the penetration of Western culture.

17) Japan's society in the 1930s and the road to militarism

※ In this session, students will announce the topic of their final essay

- What were the main trends in Japan's society in the 1930s?
- What domestic and international factors explain the rise of militarism in Japan?

- Contents:

Japanese society and culture in the 1930s. Filmmaking between the two wars. Japanese literature and the works of Kawabata Yasunari.

From cooperation with the West to expansionism. The rise of nationalism and militarism: the domestic and international context.

Effects of the economic and social crisis of the late 1920s.

Ideology and political thought in the 1930s.

The creation of Manchukuo.

The 'young military officials' problem.

Challenges to the role of political parties: toward the dominance of the military on the government.

18) Japan at war

- Why did the Pacific War break out?
- Could war be avoided?

Contents:

The Sino-Japanese war.

International reactions to Japan's expansion in Asia.

The road to Pearl Harbor: military alliances, diplomatic attempts for negotiations, and the effects of the outbreak of World War II.

From the Konoe to the Tōjō cabinet.

Japan's military campaigns in Asia.

Japanese society and economy during the war.

Postdam Declaration, atomic bombings, and surrender.

19) Social and political impact of defeat and the building of postwar Japan

- What was the impact of defeat and atomic bombings on Japanese people and society?
- How do we evaluate the reforms and policies during the Occupation period and their legacy on postwar Japan?

• Contents:

The social impact of war, atomic bombings, and Occupation.

Occupation policy and reforms.

The Japanese constitution.

The International Military Tribunal for the Far East.

Society and culture during the Occupation period.

The legal transformation of Shintō.

Cold War and the 'reverse course'.

The San Francisco Peace Treaty and the Japan-US Security Treaty.

20) Wrap-up session and discussion

- What are the major transformations and lines of continuity in Japanese history and culture?
- What factors explain changes and continuity?

- What is the relationship between Japan's domestic dynamics and its international relations?

SUGGESTED READINGS

- Beasley, W. G., *The Japanese Experience: A Short History of Japan*, London: Phoenix Press, 1999
- Benedict, Ruth, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1974
- Brown, Delmer M., ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan: Ancient Japan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Volume 1, 1993
- Dower, John W., *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999
- Duus, Peter, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan: The Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Volume 5, 1988
- Fukuzawa, Yukichi, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2008
- Gordon, Andrew, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003
- Inoue, Nobutaka, ed.; Itō Satoshi, Endō Jun and Mori Mizue, [contributors], *Shinto: A Short History*, translated and adapted by Mark Teeuwen and John Breen, London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003
- Iokibe, Makoto, ed., *The Diplomatic History of Postwar Japan*, London: Routledge, 2011
- Jansen, Marius B., ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan: The Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Volume 5, 1989
- Lafeber, Walter, *The Clash: US-Japanese Relations Throughout History*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998
- Mason, Richard H.P., and Caiger, John G., *A History of Japan*, Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 1997
- Morton, Scott W., *Japan: Its History and Culture*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994
- Ohno, Kenichi, *The economic development of Japan : the path traveled by Japan as a developing country*, Tokyo: GRIPS development forum, 2006
- Reischauer, Edwin O., *Japan: The Story of a Nation*, New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, Fourth Edition, 1990
- Sansom, G.B., *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978
- Totman, Conrad, *A History of Japan*, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2000
- Tsunoda, Ryusaku. De Bary, Theodore WM. Keene, Donald, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, New York: Columbia University Press, Volume I and II, 1964
- Tsutsui, William M., ed., *A Companion to Japanese History*, Malden, Ma.: Blackwell Publishers, 2007

- Varley, Paul, *Japanese Culture*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, Fourth Edition, 2000
- Walthall, Anne, *Japan: A Cultural, Social, and Political History*, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006
- Yamamura, Kozo, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan: Medieval Japan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Volume 3, 1990